

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**East Providence City Hall**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

**March 8, 2011**

## **Open Session**

**Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. School Committee members present: Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi, Charles Tsonos. (Luisa Abatecola - absent). Also present: Dr. Mario F. Cirillo, Jr., Superintendent of Schools, Robert M. Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq.**

**The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag & Moment of Silence were observed.**

**Student Liaison Report – Andrew Butler presented a report on high school events and activities.**

## **Student Recognition**

**The Riverside Middle School Wrestling Team was recognized for winning the State Championship; team members were congratulated and presented with certificates. Eighteen Teachers attaining tenure were recognized and certificates presented to those present.**

**Public Comment I – Motion by Mr. Tellier to allow public comment, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 4-0.**

**Michael McGuinn, a retired teacher, questioned what he heard at a meeting back in February 2010 about a restructuring plan that was supposed to save \$400,000; he asked for an update on the restructuring plan and how much money had been saved, if any at all. Dr. Cirillo replied that back when he mentioned a plan, it did not include the Watters building which was offline and not being used; this is a work still in progress and meetings have been held with a partnership group. He thought this group was being confused with bringing students back from outside placements into the district through the Bradley program.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to change the order of the agenda to move up Section J, seconded by Tellier. Vote 4-0.**

### **New Business**

**Tech Teams – Purpose and Scope of Work - Mr. Tsonos requested information on the tech team; what they do and when we stopped using them. Mary King, Finance Director, explained that there is no contract or services in place for this group which has not been used since early 2010; November invoices for labor were being paid in February; (\$3300 charge was for hardware and software). Dr. Cirillo explained that when he first arrived, the School Department shared the IT department with the city and only two days were contracted to the School Department. This vendor worked to help with tech problems which cost approximately \$100,000 before the present**

team was developed.

**Forbes Street Solar Project (CME Energy) – Jim Moran, Principal Planner for the City of East Providence attended with Mr. Martin, President of CME Energy to update the School Committee on the proposed solar project to be placed on the site of the Forbes Street municipal landfill which has not been used for that purpose since 1980. Mr. Moran presented a brief overview of the project and explained how sites such as the Forbes Street landfill can be used for renewable energy projects. After the City Council requested proposals for development partners for redevelopment of the former landfill at Forbes Street in Riverside, CME Energy was selected and the city entered into an agreement with them. Mr. Martin of CME explained that not much else can be done with the capped landfill, other than using the site for renewable energy with sun as the resource for fuel. His company will work with National Grid to make sure a consistent supply of energy is available; he explained the process of net metering and how the solar project could be used educationally to benefit students at both Riverside Middle School and the High School. His company is working on an economic plan to benefit the schools and the city and hopes to become a positive neighbor in East Providence. This long-range project offers the potential to generate nearly free electricity to power all of the city buildings. Mr. Martin is working with the City to obtain grants for the project and would be happy to come back to update the School Committee at a later date.**

**Young Democrats Club at the High School – A motion was made by Mr. Tellier to approve the stipend required to appoint an advisor and to move forward with this club, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. (Appointment of club advisor will need to be made on a docket at a later meeting)**

**Lions Club International Art Contest - Mr. Tsonos asked to defer this item to the March 22nd agenda.**

**II.B.1. Budget and II.B.2 Budget Planning - Revised Policies – First Passage - Mary King, Finance Director, explained that the Finance subcommittee reviewed the policies; revisions were suggested to adjust the timing of when budget information is due. Meetings will be held with the principals to allow them to provide input as to what items are important to them for the next year. Mr. Furtado hopes to hold public meetings where the principals can present facts and figures; this will provide a forum where parents can attend and find out what is needed in their buildings, while at the same time provide the School Committee with as much information as possible to make budget decisions. A motion was made by Mr. Furtado, seconded by Mrs. Rossi for first passage of the revised policies. Vote 4-0.**

**Rebuilding Together – Mr. Furtado invited Mr. Jim Miller to explain this community volunteer project; volunteers are needed for April 30, 2011 to assist with repair and rehabilitation work on properties in**

East Providence, which may include school buildings such as Oldham. Flyers will be sent out to spread the word and students can use this project for community service credits. Information will be provided on the City website and he will be getting together with the School Department. This project, 100% community involvement at zero cost, requires School Committee approval.

### **Deficit Reduction Plan**

Mr. Tsonos said the School Committee continues to ask questions about public financing and wherever they look there are many problems; as a new School Committee they have found challenges; they want to have all the facts straight and it is not easy to find out where we are financially. In the previous year FY 2010 budget, \$500,000 was applied from the sale of the Grove Avenue School in anticipation of closing on the building, but we have not received any money from the sale while \$500,000 is listed in the budget last year to pay the deficit. While the previous School Committee claimed to balance the budget, one-half million dollars was added as revenue without having received those funds, since the closing on the sale of the building is still not complete. He referred to a letter regarding a plan to pay off the deficit and asked the Superintendent to explain about the \$1/2 million dollars listed as revenue.

Dr. Cirillo explained that the sale of the Grove Avenue building to Montessori School had been approved by the previous School

Committee and City Council; the assessed value of the building was \$500,000, but the price was lowered to \$450,000 because the roof needed repairs. Those funds were applied to the operating budget since the purchase and sales agreement was completed and attempts had been made to get the closing done; he asked the City Council to have someone attend the closing, but the city has not moved on it. Mr. Furtado questioned whether these funds should have been included in the operating budget since the revenue never materialized.

Mary King, Finance Director explained that after the budget was approved in September, they received information that the sale of the Grove Avenue building would not happen by the fiscal year end; it was anticipated that the building would be sold in FY 2011 and grant dollars to be spent in 2011 were designated to the 2010 budget to be used in anticipation of receiving the revenue from the sale of the building, which will then make the 2011 budget whole.

Mr. Tsonos asked if the Superintendent approved that. The Superintendent explained that the School Committee and City Council agreed to put that in the budget. Mr. Tsonos said he sees the deficit getting bigger and that answer does not resolve the issue; we already allocated this money in FY 2010 budget and he is puzzled since the Superintendent is responsible for the budget; the School Committee never hears about transferring money or grant funds being moved.

**Mr. Tsonos asked if anyone approves moving money; he has a concern that we have no control; how can we count this money, making this deficit larger; the School Department has been looking for support on TANS; looking at these numbers, it does not give a warm and fuzzy about the funds of the School Department; he was not told about moving money; for example on February 18th approximately \$70,000 in raises were given to central office administrators; those contracts, enacted November 17th, included raises; on February 18th, were there any modifications to the budget approved in October and did anyone get approval.**

**The Superintendent explained that when facing emergencies, money needs to be transferred; we can tap other money to cover that; that money is allocated by the City Council to operating expenses. The sale of the building is anticipated money and the School Department expected to receive it. The School Department has asked for the sale to take place, it was agreed upon, and the Purchase & Sales agreement was completed; the former Solicitor, Mr. Briden, tried to get it closed in November.**

**Mr. Tsonos pointed out for public record, a letter sent to the former School Committee Chair that the deficit plan was shot down by the Auditor General; the act of transferring this money to avoid deficit spending only delays the deficit and we are funding more and more shortages. Mr. Tsonos has asked for a deficit reduction plan**

**Mrs. Rossi said she came before the School Committee and asked about locking contracts in and sticking the city with something unaffordable; the former chair said there were no raises but step increases in the contracts; they were thought about last minute with no idea where the money was coming from. Ms. King advised they were based on the performance evaluation of individuals as well.**

**Mrs. King advised that the budget is a snapshot in time; things move around; we have been working with the city on the deficit reduction plan.**

**Dr. Cirillo explained that the last four-year plan for the deficit reduction approved by the City Council and School Committee was based on meals tax and funding formula; it was back loaded with more money from the state, more money to the deficit, and in four years, the deficit would be gone. The Auditor General wanted it front loaded and we did not have the money to do that, so we have tried several times to meet with the City on TANS to find out if this would be a viable option. A meeting is scheduled with Mr. Anderson and Attorney Ellen Cornea to pursue the TANS idea on March 16th at 10:00AM. Mr. Tsonos said that shifting of responsibilities did not make him feel any better about our responsibilities.**

**In response to a question from the Superintendent as to whether the debt belongs to the city or the School Department, Mr. Silva advised**



that the School Department has to find a solution and the city assists us with it. Dr. Cirillo said the \$5.2 million deficit is not new; it has been here for awhile. Mr. Tsonos has heard the same answer elsewhere in the State. Mr. Furtado heard that the funding formula may not be part of the Governor's budget, because the money is just not in the bank.

**YMCA/Boys Club – Agreement and Details of Operation – Mrs. Rossi** requested information about the terms of agreement of the before and after school programs; who occupies the space and do they lease the school. Dr. Cirillo explained these are long standing programs in the schools and they applied through central building use forms from inception to use the buildings, paying nominal custodial fees and operating as a courtesy to parents who require before and after school daycare.

Mrs. Rossi asked if this is run as a day care, do they share the costs of electricity and insurance; is it free of charge or do the parents pay for it. Mrs. Rossi would like to have the expenses broken out as to the cost of opening the building for this use. The Superintendent will research it and provide the information to all School Committee members.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to move back to the regular order of the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 4-0.

**PBGR Discussion - Track Success Rate and Process – Janet Sheehan, Principal of East Providence High School updated the Committee regarding the senior class; she met with the leadership team on February 18th and talked to parents; the deadline was extended to June 1st for seniors; she also met with seniors. With this particular class, the requirements changed every year on deadlines and miscommunications may have occurred, but this does not take away the fact that they have a lot of work to do. Information is posted on the website, and she will see no one after June 1st. Every Senior currently deficient has met with portfolio advisors to map out a plan of action. Currently 91 students have not handed in an essay and 126 no portfolio. There will be five more portfolio sessions after school. Community service of 24 hours has not been completed by some students and 202 students are failing one or more classes. A number of assemblies have been held, and the principal has met with all seniors. Ms. Sheehan did not know what else could be done at this point.**

**Mrs. Rossi asked about other options from the state. Ms. Sheehan recommends sticking with what was voted on by School Committee policy; she has had conversations about why kids are not doing well on NECAP tests and her opinion is that assessments have outpaced instruction; teachers feel that the junior class is more on task and more settled, because requirements were not changing every year for them.**

**Mrs. Rossi asked if East Providence has raised the bar too high at 24 credits; because they have not learned the material why continue to put the bar too high to trip kids up. Ms. Sheehan explained that about 25 students did not graduate last year and counselors come in to speak to students about GED when they quit school. Mrs. Rossi asked at what point are they leaving and why; were they let down.**

**Ms. Sheehan said, like any data, she hated to make a decision based on one cohort/class of students and now having exposure to research, we are better prepared to look at more than one year; the culture has changed and the students know what is expected of them.**

**Dr. Cirillo did not think any decision should be made right now, since this is not the case for the students coming up. Ms. Sheehan felt more confident that we will be able to do more things better; the students understand, a new data base tracking is in place for portfolios, and that advisors have check lists. There is a concern about some seniors not being able to do a research paper.**

**Mr. Furtado asked if the School Committee can be provided with a track; possibly change the policy; if step one is not completed, they can't go to step 2. He asked that figures be put together for September 2011. Ms. Sheehan will take the time to do that.**

**The School Committee took a short Recess and Reconvened.**

**A PowerPoint presentation provided an Overview of staffing, responsibilities, accomplishments, on-going operations and future goals of Registration, Admissions, & Special Education.**

**Discussion took place as to how residency inquiries are received and handled on a case by case basis;**

**Placing students back in neighborhood schools, which the Superintendent is looking at for September along with assigning one principal to each school rather than the current arrangement of one principal overseeing two schools.**

**Discussion about 504 plans, which is a Civil Rights plan for accommodations for students in class, such as a special seating arrangement, large print books, more time to take a test or other accommodations.**

**In response to Mrs. Rossi's question about the date when the Truant Officer was hired; Mr. Daft responded it was in September 2009 for three days per week; he monitors students moving in and out and this is the same position we previously had full time. When asked about when Ms. Ursillo was hired, she explained that she has been employed here since May as an at-will employee.**

**Mrs. Rossi toured the Meadowcrest facility and commended Ms. Jane Sylvia and her staff for doing an amazing job.**

**Discussion about HIPPA laws on electronic records and at what cost. Ms. Ursillo advised this would be paid by a grant. Questions about the number of students in out placements and accomplishments to reduce that number and the tuitions to outside placements.**

**Ms. Ursillo explained that Bradley has had a positive effect on the avoidance of cost of out placements of students; 40 children at a savings of about \$100,000; a more detailed report will be provided on Bradley at the next meeting.**

**Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence – Mrs. Patti Whalen, Manager of H/R & Benefits presented the following personnel items:**

#### **PERSONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Laurie Tubman Math Teacher – Riverside Middle School – 2011-2012**

**Amy Watson Grade 5 Teacher – Whiteknact Elementary School - 2011-2012**

#### **RETIREMENT**

**Joseph Tavares (17years) Maintenance and Facilities Manager - East Providence School Department – Effective 06/30/2011**

#### **RESIGNATIONS**

**Louisa Resendes Portuguese Teacher – Riverside Middle School  
– Effective 2/21/2011**

**Nancy Gage Speech Pathologist – Effective 2011-2012 School Year  
followed by a 2 year leave of absence**

**Joanne Sabato Speech Pathologist – Whiteknact Elementary School  
Effective 03/14/2011**

### **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

**Crystal White Special Education Teacher – Martin Middle School –  
approximately 05/23/11 – End of School Year**

**Financial Report – Mary King, Finance Director, reviewed the  
revenues and expenditures at 1/3 through the fiscal year; revenues  
will lag due to funding from the state and will move forward in April.  
Salaries will fall in the summer, but all is on target for the budget.**

**Mrs. Rossi asked about the job fund and what would happen if we do  
not receive the money. Mrs. King explained that it is a one shot deal  
for FY10-11 money from the federal government for retaining new  
teaching positions and will reduce overall salaries; if we do not  
receive the money, we will be short another million. Dr. Cirillo  
explained that is why he recommended the layoff of teachers; we  
need to wait for the Governor's budget numbers.**

**Mrs. Rossi asked why she did not see any CTC expenditures and did we take over the Career and Technical Center. Ms. King explained that anything outside of the general fund is not here; there are legal changes with the CTC and not a transfer of money; only certain things can be done with the money; culinary and cosmetology programs will be ready in September; revenues will show and go out; only 1/3 this fiscal year \$199,000. Mrs. Rossi noted that we could lose \$1million and add to the \$6 million deficit.**

**Bond Funded Construction Update – Mary King reported we are moving forward; we are clear on permits and will start lighting projects; next week \$15 million for ADA issues; working with SMMA and Johnson Controls to discuss areas of overlap; good communication between companies.**

**Food Service Equipment Update – Mary King reported that funding had been secured through Chartwells to purchase the kitchen equipment which should be delivered in three to four weeks 3-4 weeks at a 3% interest rate over five years at \$1900 per month.**

**Security Camera Update – Mr. Feola advised that we are waiting for Homeland Security who gave an extension to 6/30/11 to use grant money; as soon as written approval is received, we have between 30-40 days to finish the project.**

## **Consent Agenda**

**Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by Mr. Tellier to approve the minutes of the meetings held on February 8, 2011 and February 18, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. 4-0.**

**Approval of Budget/Facilities Subcommittee Minutes – A motion was made by Mr. Tellier to approve the minutes of the subcommittee meetings held on February 7, 2011 and February 22, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 4-0.**

## **Action Items**

**Personnel Appointments – The Personnel items were presented by Mrs. Whalen:**

### **APPOINTMENTS**

**Ellen Will    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Mary Ellen Hatch    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Patrick O'Brien    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Linda Jackson    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Richard Silva    Vocational After-School Program –**



**Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Patricia Piros    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Karen Cardillo    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**Anthony Gagliardi    Vocational After-School Program –  
Career Technology Center (10 weeks)**

**(CTC Grant - Labor and Training Workplace Program – 30 students enrolled - runs ten weeks, fully funded) Discussion regarding the Portfolio Camp; Mrs. Rossi would like facts before approving the position and questioned the schedule change for the business teacher.**

**Mr. Silva advised that the School Committee can approve recommendations with the exception of last two which could be tabled to next meeting: Wendy Aurelio, Teacher Assistant Portfolio Camp, East**

**Providence High School and the schedule change from 3/5 to 5/5 for Keith Anderson, Business Teacher at East Providence High School which took effect on January 28, 2011.**

**Mr. Tsonos said the issue is about money; is the item already**

**designated in the budget; he would like as much detail as possible in the future.**

**A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to approve only the eight positions for the Vocational After School Program (grant funded), seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 4-0. Going forward, Mrs. Rossi would like to prevent people from starting work before being approved by the School Committee; she would like more heads up on things; she asked why is the School Committee hearing about it after the person has already been hired.**

### **Awarding of Bids**

**Mary King, Finance Director recommended that the bid for Multimedia Classroom Equipment be awarded to Valley Communications in the amount of \$63,156 (LCD Projectors and Smart Response Systems). Motion to approve by Mr. Furtado, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 4-0.**

**Mary King, Finance Director, recommended that the bid for Owner's Project Management, Representation and Commissioning Services be awarded to Farrar & Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$498,840. A subcommittee reviewed proposals received, interviewed three candidates and recommended Farrar, Inc. to the full building committee. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to approve, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 4-0.**

**Approval of Amendment to 403(b) Plan – Mary King, Finance Director asked for approval of the Resolution Adopting Amendment to East Providence Public Schools 403(b) which would allow employees to take loans from their plans. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to approve, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 4-0.**

**Requisitions – Bill List**

**Warrant #1071 2/10/11 \$ 4,599.00**

**Warrant #1072 2/15/11 \$ 330.33**

**Warrant #1073 3/4/11 \$1,286,976.27**

**Warrant #1074 3/4/11 \$ 70,104.57**

**Warrant #1075 3/4/11 \$ 33,186.29**

**Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 4-0.**

**Field Trip Approval – Martin Middle School 6th grade students to Alton Jones Campus on May 16–17, 2011. Superintendent recommended approval. Motion by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier.**

**Vote 4-0.**

**Home School Request – Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 4-0.**

**IV.A.2. School Day (inclement weather/student entry) – Second Passage (Revised Policy) Motion by Mr. Tellier to approve, seconded**

**by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 4-0.**

## **Public Comment II - None**

**Announcements – Mr. Furtado read a thank you letter regarding a recent fundraising event. Citizens Scholarship will conduct a phone-a-thon; RIPIN.org event. Dr. Cirillo mentioned that artwork will be exhibited at the Weaver Library on March 17th. Mr. Tellier announced that Kent Heights School will have an auction/fundraiser event on Friday, March 25th to raise money for the playground.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to move to executive session to discuss: Collective Bargaining: R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2): Principals' and Teachers' Contracts; Litigation/Potential Litigation: R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2): CTC/RIDE; Conflict Resolution Specialists; Open Meeting Act Complaint; Special Education Matters, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Roll call vote: Mr. Furtado, aye; Mrs. Rossi, aye; Mr. Tellier, aye; Mr. Tsonos, aye.**

**A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to return to public session, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola (Luisa Abatecola joined the School Committee in executive session). Vote 5-0.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0. No votes were taken in executive session.**

**A Motion was made by Mr. Furtado to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant**

**Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee**